

## CLAIMS

We claim:

1. A menu emulation method comprising:
  - encoding a form-submit element with a menu-item description and an associated graphical icon denoting a selectable menu;
  - disposing said encoded form-submit element in network distributable markup and distributing said markup to a content browser; and,
  - responsive to a selection of one of said menu-item description and said graphical icon, further distributing over said network to said content browser a graphical menu-structure encoded in at least one additional form-submit element.
2. The menu emulation method of claim 1, wherein said encoding step comprises:
  - embedding in a markup representation of said form-submit element, a network reference to a server configured to produce enhanced graphical menu images, said network reference comprising a textual menu-item description and a menu type.
3. The menu emulation method of claim 1, wherein said disposing step comprises:
  - embedding said encoded form-submit element in network distributable markup defining a table cell in a table;
  - formatting said table cell with a background color matching the background colors of other table cells in said table; and,
  - distributing said markup, upon request, to a content browser.

1 4. The method of claim 3, wherein said step of further distributing a graphical menu-  
2 structure comprises:

3 responsive to a selection of said encoded form-submit element embedded in said  
4 table cell, assembling a graphical menu-structure encoded in at least one additional  
5 form-submit element;

6 replacing said encoded form-submit element embedded in said table cell with  
7 said graphical menu-structure; and,

8 formatting said table cell with a background color which differs from the  
9 background colors of other table cells in said table.

1 5. The menu emulation method of claim 1, wherein said disposing step comprises:  
2 embedding said encoded form-submit element in network distributable markup  
3 defining a table cell in a table row in a table;

4 further embedding other encoded form-submit elements in other table cells in  
5 said table row; and,

6 formatting each said table cell with a first background color.

1 6. The menu emulation method of claim 1, wherein said further distributing step  
2 comprises:

3 detecting a selection of one of said encoded form-submit elements in said row;

4 responsive to said detection, assembling a graphical menu-structure encoded in  
5 at least one additional form-submit element;

6 replacing said one of said encoded form-submit elements with said graphical  
7 menu-structure; and,  
8 formatting a table cell containing said graphical menu-structure with a  
9 background color which differs from the background colors of said other table cells in  
10 said table row.

1 7. The method of claim 4, wherein said assembling step comprises generating a  
2 graphical display of a menu-structure, said display comprising at least one of a textual  
3 menu action, a graphically selectable menu action, and a nested menu structure.

4 8. The method of claim 6, further comprising:  
5 preserving state information for each encoded form-submit element; and,  
6 upon detecting a selection of one of said encoded form-submit elements,  
7 identifying graphical menu-structures in said markup from said state information, and  
8 removing said graphical menu-structures from said markup except for a graphical  
9 menu-structure assembled for said selected encoded form-submit element.

1 9. A menu emulation method comprising:  
2 serving markup to a plurality of content browsers, said markup comprising at  
3 least one form-based input element encapsulating a reference to a composite image of  
4 menu text and a graphical icon, said icon denoting a selectable menu;  
5 receiving an indication from at least one of said content browsers that said form-  
6 based input element has been selected; and,

responsive to said receipt of said indication, further serving to said at least content browser a graphical image of a menu structure, said graphical image comprising at least one form-based input element encapsulating a reference to a composite image of menu text and a graphical icon, said icon denoting at least one of a menu action and a selectable menu.

10. A machine readable storage having stored thereon a computer program for performing menu emulation, said computer program comprising a routine set of instructions for causing the machine to perform the steps of:

serving markup to a plurality of content browsers, said markup comprising at least one form-based input element encapsulating a reference to a composite image of menu text and a graphical icon, said icon denoting a selectable menu;

receiving an indication from at least one of said content browsers that said form-based input element has been selected; and,

responsive to said receipt of said indication, further serving to said at least content browser a graphical image of a menu structure, said graphical image comprising at least one form-based input element encapsulating a reference to a composite image of menu text and a graphical icon, said icon denoting at least one of a menu action and a selectable menu.

11. A network distributable emulated menu comprising:

a plurality of composite images, each said image comprising menu text and a graphical icon, said icon denoting a selectable menu;

4 a plurality of selectable form-based input elements, each said element  
5 encapsulating one of said composite images; and,  
6 a graphical image of a menu structure, said graphical image comprising at least  
7 one form-based input element encapsulating a reference to a composite image of menu  
8 text and a graphical icon, said icon denoting at least one of a menu action and a  
9 selectable menu.

10 12. The emulated menu of claim 11, further comprising a plurality of table cells, each  
11 cell containing one of said selectable form-based input elements.

12 13. The emulated menu of claim 11, wherein said menu structure comprises at least  
13 one of a textual menu action, a graphically selectable menu action, and a nested menu  
14 structure.